

## ***The Five Dysfunctions of a Team***

by Patrick Lencioni

Book review by Beacon Hill Technologies

***The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*** is the narrative of the trials and tribulations of a group of executives at DecisionTech, an imaginary Silicon Valley company.

As presented in the book, each dysfunction builds on the one before it. Lencioni presents these behaviors as a pyramid, with absence of trust at the bottom:

1. Because we need to appear invulnerable, we create an absence of trust.
2. Because we fear conflict, we have artificial harmony on our team.
3. Because we lack commitment, we encourage ambiguity.
4. Because we avoid accountability, we ensure low standards.
5. Because we seek personal status and ego we are inattentive to results of the team.

The author makes a credible argument for his model of bad team behavior that infects many teams. His five step pyramid is interesting and explained thoroughly. Throughout the book, Lencioni illustrates and advocates important team concepts:

- Get the group off-site for a two-day session each quarter to discuss issues and strategize.
- Early on, develop ground rules (operating principles) to govern group behavior.
- Build trust by encouraging disclosure, using techniques such as introductory exercises and personality assessments.
- Encourage lively discussion and debate within the team.
- Create a simple means of evaluating team progress toward its objective.
- Encourage cross-functional responsibility for all team objectives.
- Immediately address poor individual behavior and remove disruptive team members.
- Demonstrate loyalty to the executive team; it must supercede loyalty to the department.

Admirably, at the core of this book, the author encourages team members to develop close working relationships, so they can engage and challenge each other in debating real issues. Lencioni is a strong advocate of fostering conflict within the boundaries of the team, encouraging members to “fight” and “get in each other’s faces.”

Although at times you’ll feel like you’re reading a compilation of the minutes from your last twenty meetings, the book is peppered with valuable points for business teams.